

EXCERPT FROM NATIONAL PLANT MATERIALS MANUAL

Part 539: Mission, Purpose, Policies, and Authorities for the Plant Materials Program

PART 539.0 GENERAL

539.00 Mission

The mission of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Plant Materials (PM) Program is to develop, test, and transfer effective state-of-the-art plant science technology to meet customer and resource needs. NRCS PM activities are consistent with the objectives of the current United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and NRCS Strategic Plans (Exhibit 539-1), namely to provide timely and effective vegetative solutions for identified resource needs.

539.01 Purpose

The purpose of the NRCS Plant Materials Program is to: 1) assemble, test, and release plant materials for conservation use, 2) determine techniques for successful use and management of conservation species, 3) facilitate the commercial increase of conservation species, 4) provide for the timely development and transfer of effective state-of-the-art applied plant science technology to solve conservation problems, and 5) promote the use of plant science technology to meet the goals and objectives of the USDA and NRCS Strategic Plans (Exhibit 539-1).

To accomplish this purpose, NRCS maintains and operates a Plant Materials Program as part of its on-going coordinated conservation operations activities through a network of Plant Materials Centers (PMC) and Plant Materials Specialists (PMS).

539.02 Policy

The Plant Materials Program:

- works to meet the goals and objectives of the USDA and NRCS Strategic Plans (Exhibit 539-1) and to comply with the authorities described in Part 539.1.
- works to meet the objectives of other federal, state, and local programs and initiatives, such as the USDA “Farm Bill”.
- cooperates with other partners with the major emphasis being to provide timely and effective state-of-the-art plant science technology.
- performs activities and provides services consistent with USDA and NRCS Affirmative Action, Equal Employment Opportunity, and Civil Rights policies.

PART 539.1 AUTHORITY

539.10 General

The authority to operate a Plant Materials Program is provided for in Federal Law. A brief description of the authorities relevant to the PM Program is found in Part 539.11.

Full text for each of these authorities is located at the National Plant Materials Center in Beltsville, MD.

539.11 Description of Authorities

Authority for the NRCS PM program is provided by:

(a) Soil Conservation Act of 1935

The Soil Conservation Act of 1935 (Public Law 74-46, 49 Stat. 163; 16 USC 590 [a-f]) declares that it is the policy of Congress to provide permanently for the control and prevention of soil erosion and thereby preserve natural resources. This act provides for basic authority for the Soil Conservation Service (now the Natural Resources Conservation Service) Plant Materials Program.

(b) Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act of 1977

The Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act of 1977 (Public Law 95-192; 16 USC 40) declares that it is the policy of Congress to ensure that the Department of Agriculture possesses information, technical expertise, and a delivery system for providing assistance to land users with respect to conservation and use of soils; plants; woodlands; watershed protection and flood prevention; the conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water; animal husbandry; fish and wildlife management; recreation; community development; and related resource uses.

(c) NRCS Policy on the Operation of Plant Materials Centers (1984)

This policy, issued in 1984, is contained in 7 CFR 613 and the Federal Register, Vol. 49 No. 62 (March 29, 1984) and clarifies the role, activity, and function of NRCS Plant Materials Centers to support NRCS conservation activities. This CFR updates information on NRCS conservation activities and Plant Materials Centers as described in Public Law 74-46. This CFR is presented in Exhibit 539-5 because of its importance to the Plant Materials Program.

(d) Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994

The Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 (7 USC 6962) authorizes the Secretary to establish and maintain within the Department, an agency called the Natural Resources Conservation Service. This Act changed Soil Conservation Service to NRCS.